



NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



No Child Left Behind and Charter Schools: Giving Parents Information and Options

June 2006

Charter schools' emphasis on accountability, flexibility and local control make them attractive educational alternatives for many families.

Accountability for Results. Charter schools are exempt from many of the statutory and regulatory requirements imposed on other public schools. They receive increased flexibility in exchange for improved student achievement. Charter schools risk closure if they do not show results.

Flexibility and Local Control. In states that allow them, parents, teachers, community and business groups and others may organize to start neighborhood charter schools from scratch, with innovative practices and clear academic missions.

More Options for Parents. Charter schools are open to all students and free-of-charge to parents who seek a school that better meets their children's academic needs.

Currently, about 3,600 charter schools educate more than a million students in 40 states and Washington, D.C. The *No Child Left Behind Act* recognizes their value and vitality. This innovative law gives parents new information and options to help them make the best possible choice for their children.

Information. Under *No Child Left Behind*, school "report cards" are made available to parents and all taxpayers. Data is disaggregated to show overall student achievement as well as the performance of student groups once left behind.

Choice. Parents with children in Title I schools marked "in need of improvement" for two consecutive years have the option to transfer to another public school within the district, including a public charter school. President Bush's proposed \$100 million America's Opportunity Scholarships for Kids program would permit parents of students in schools that have not made Adequate Yearly Progress for six or more years to transfer them to a private school of their choice.

Results. Schools that repeatedly underperform must develop an improvement plan with parents' and teachers' input.

Studies show charter schools' effectiveness:

- Students at charter schools that request and choose their own curriculum score **higher in reading** than students in other public schools (National Center for Education Statistics)
- Charter schools are especially likely to **raise the achievement levels** of low-income and Hispanic students (Caroline Hoxby, Harvard University)

President Bush and Secretary Margaret Spellings are committed to seeing charter schools opened in every state. Although more than 1,000 new schools opened between 2000 and 2004, long waiting lists and admission lotteries testify to their growing need.

- Since taking office, President Bush has invested more than **\$1.1 billion** on the Charter Schools Program and more than **\$186 million** on charter school facilities to reduce waiting lists.
- The U.S. Department of Education has launched an ongoing **evaluation of charter schools**, the most rigorous ever undertaken.

For more information on No Child Left Behind visit www.ed.gov or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.